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PALESTINE REFUGEE PROBLEM

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE - W/6, 28 March 1949

Note from the Secretariat on the Israeli Paper on Arab Refugees

It was remarked during a recent meeting of the Conciliation Commission in connection with the Israeli paper on refugees, that the discrepancy between the figure given as the Jewish estimated total of refugees (530,000) and the sum of the quotas of urban and rural refugees to be settled in the Arab countries (477,000) represented the number of refugees (53,000) that the Government of Israel was prepared to accept. It was also remarked that it seemed to indicate that the Jews were prepared to accept 10 percent of the estimated total.

It should be pointed out that a careful study of the document in question shows the above supposition to be unfounded, and the document itself to contain a number of doubtful points that would make the drawing of precise conclusions from it, a hazardous and uncertain undertaking.

a) On page 3, the total figure of 528,000 (300,000 rural and 228,000 urban) is given with reservations regarding the accuracy of the 1945 census. The paper reads in this connection as follows: "Assuming the 1945 census figures for the town areas to have been correct in 1948 - an assumption which may be questioned in view of the census experience in the Arab villages - the number who left these towns would be 228,000". (In the case of the villages, they state that they found the census figure exaggerated.)

b) The 175,000 "city evacuees" mentioned on page 12, are considered not as the total of urban refugees, but as those who "might be resettled in the various Arab countries with the aid of outside funds ..." The difference between the above mentioned 175,000 and the total of urban refugees, estimated on page 3 at 228,000 and on page 11 at 200,000, is more or less covered by the 15 to 20 percent of this total who are considered to "possess sufficient means to care for themselves" and would not have to be resettled with outside aid. This category would be between 30,000 and 45,000, thus either leaving a maximum of 19,000 refugees unaccounted for, or providing for a maximum of 15,000 in excess of the total, depending on which of the two estimates is taken. These variations are probably due to the vagueness of the data and should cancel out.

From the above, it would appear reasonable to assume that the Government of Israel had no intention of indicating to the Commission in an indirect way the number of refugees that it would be prepared to accept.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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